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EDITORIAL

TEACHERS are always, or should always be, asking themselves questions, and some do. In the teaching of English as a foreign language, some pertinent questions are :—Should School work be geared to examination work, or should examination work be geared to School work? Should translation be taught, or should translation not be taught? What is the place of grammar in the teaching of English? Should we use the child's innate sense of beauty and rhythm and teach poetry, or should we consider that poetry is something which can only be taught at post-Secondary School level?

This issue includes notes on some experiments which the Uttar Pradesh Government has been carrying out to relate examinations to School work, and on the experience of teachers who have considered the usefulness of teaching poetry and translation and grammar in their teaching of English.

We offer these notes without comment, and hope that teachers will draw their own conclusions from them.

HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION OF THE BOARD OF HIGH SCHOOL AND INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION, UTTAR PRADESH

(A Note on the recently introduced changes in the Question Papers in English.)

In our present set-up it has not been possible to devote the same number of years and time to the teaching of English in schools as was done in the past. Teachers and examiners have however tended to think in terms of past 'standards' in teaching and assessment. This has created considerable confusion, not the least of which has been difficult text-books and unsuitable examination papers. The matter came forcibly to the notice of the Board of High School and Intermediate Education of the State when the percentage of failures in English at its examinations rose, and we therefore found it necessary to investigate the problem. We examined critically our syllabuses, text-books, examination question papers, some samples of candidates' answers and their assessments.

Text-books in English as well as in other subjects for the High School and Intermediate examinations had been approved only a year earlier, and changing the syllabuses, therefore, would necessitate the changing of the books approved which, in its turn, was bound to create serious difficulty for everybody, particularly for the students. So we decided to go slow. We left the syllabuses and the text-books alone and re-examined the question papers, samples of the candidates' answers and their assessments by the examiners with a view to exploring possibilities of introducing some change within the limits of the syllabuses and the text-books, which might lead to improvement in the teaching of the language in our schools and have a benevolent effect on the examination results. Our main findings were :

1. The question papers did not bear a relation to the achievement possible within the limited time.
2. The candidates did not have satisfactory command over the most essential grammatical structures and some of the simplest but most useful vocabulary items of English, while they were attempting to do more advanced work.
3. The long answers, as a rule, were redundant to a large extent.
4. The examination question papers could be substantially improved without immediately changing the syllabuses, and the assessment of the answers also could be made objective to a considerable extent.

The English Language Teaching Institute of the Government Central Pedagogical Institute, Allahabad, was asked to prepare some sample question papers in collaboration with the staff of the Government Central Pedagogical Institute and give them to about 1000 students of Classes IX, X, XI and XII to answer. The Institute prepared three different sets of tests, administered them, assessed the answers and tabulated the results. After a careful study of the entire data, it submitted its suggestions to the Secretary, Board of High School and Intermediate Education. The suggestions were considered by the committees concerned of the Board and the Chairman and were, after approval, sent on to the heads of institutions in the State.

The broad principles underlying the suggestions are :

1. The question paper should test what the candidates know and not what they do not know. Hence the passages set for explanation or to answer questions on should be in simple, straightforward English, and not those containing figurative and out-of-the-way words and expressions and literary or mythological allusions.

2. The examination should test candidates' knowledge, both active and passive, of the essential and useful sentence and phrase patterns and vocabulary items.

3. Questions on formal grammar should be cut down as much as possible without ostensibly going against the syllabus, and in their place those on functional or operative grammar should be set.

4. The question paper should be a judicious combination of the essay type and objective type of tests.

5. In order to cover a wider ground in the prescribed books, there should be a larger number of questions which require short answers rather than one or two questions requiring long answers.

6. As far as possible, only one language skill or ability should be tested by means of a particular question.

7. The unseen passage is primarily a test of comprehension and questions on it should, therefore, be related to the content and should require short answers.

8. The passage set for translation into English should contain as many different basic English phrases and sentence structures as possible.

9. In order to control redundant writing in the essay type questions there should be some specifications in regard to the length of the answer and approach to the question.

10. Where necessary, examples should be given so that the candidates may not be in any doubt about what they have to do.

Clarifications sought by heads of institutions and teachers of

English on various points in the above-mentioned suggestions were sent to them by the English Language Teaching Institute. The reactions of both teachers and students to the changes introduced, according to the reports available, have been quite favourable. There are, of course, still quite a few teachers who believe that the teaching of grammatical rules, definitions, parsing and analysis contributes substantially to the learning of English by pupils, but the majority of them are happy that this useless load has been lifted off their pupils' heads. Other changes have been unanimously welcomed.

The details of the changes introduced are contained in the following suggestions produced by the Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Uttar Pradesh, in respect of Examination Papers :

SUGGESTIONS

Text and Grammar

Paper I

(*A*) Text

(*i*) *Intelligent questions based on the texts demanding short answers*

It is suggested that instead of two questions, one on the book for detailed study and the other on the book for non-detailed study, there should be five questions, three on the former and two on the latter. These questions should require answers which should not consist of more than two or three sentences each.

As far as possible there should be only one question on one lesson. Each of the five questions should carry 2 marks. The questions should be framed in simple, straightforward language and should seek only factual information.

Thus, if there is a larger number of questions, more ground will be covered and the chances of candidates producing unintelligently memorized stuff will be reduced to the minimum.

(ii) *Question requiring substance of a passage from the text-books*

The passage selected should be absolutely free from figurative language and should be either a simple descriptive or narrative piece. The length of the substance to be given by the candidates should be indicated in terms of the number of words. If, for instance, the passage consists of about 150 words, the candidates should be asked to give its substance in about 50 words. Teachers of English in schools should train their pupils to write substances of passages in this way.

(iii) *Word meanings in Hindi or English with illustrations of those words in sentences in English*

A word has as many meanings as the situations in which it can operate, and, further, it is well-nigh impossible to find an equivalent of a word, isolated from its context, either in the same language or in any other language. For this reason candidates are baffled when they are called upon to give meanings of isolated words either in Hindi or English. Very often they waste a lot of time in selecting the meaning which may be acceptable to the examiner.

It is, therefore, suggested that the meanings of the words should be given in Hindi and English separately in the question paper itself in an order different from the order of the words of which the meanings are required, and the candidates should be required to select the meanings from the given ones. The lists containing the meanings should be longer than the list of words in order to minimize guessing.

Example

(*a*) There are three lists of words given below :
List (A) contains the words from the text-books and Lists (B) and (C) contain their meanings in English and Hindi. Select any 5 words from List (A) and write their meanings from List (B) or List (C).

List (*A*) symbol; message; to irrigate; to recognize; to vanish; popular; to create.

List (*B*) to know again; a sign; to go out of sight; to produce; a piece of news; to water; to come; liked by people; to rain; to play.

List (*C*) पहचानना; प्रतीक; गायब हो जाना; बनाना; सन्देश; सींचना; आना; लोकप्रिय; बरसना; खेलना ।

(*b*) Use the 5 words selected by you in your own sentence, in English.

(iv) *Explanation of prose pieces in Hindi or English*

The only improvement that can be suggested here is that the pieces selected should contain short and simple sentences and concrete words of high frequency and everyday use. The passages should be either descriptive or narrative. Naming the lesson from which the passage is taken should suffice for the 'Context.' Teachers will do well to bear in mind that explanation of a passage is not its paraphrase or literal translation. Pupils should be trained systematically to read and re-read a passage until it is fully comprehended and then leave it alone and explain what is said in it in their own simple language.

(v) *Explanation of a few lines from poems in Hindi or English*

Here, too, the selected piece should be very simple and straightforward and either descriptive or narrative. For the 'Context' candidates should be asked only to name the poem from which the lines are taken.

Passages containing literary or mythological allusions and having unfamiliar background or references should, as far as possible, be avoided in the question papers.

(*B*) Grammar

(i) *Filling in gaps in sentences, etc.*

Candidates should be asked to fill in the gaps with verb-forms, prepositions, adverbs, adjectives, subordinate conjunctions, etc. Words should be given in the brackets against each sentence from which candidates should select the right word to fill in the gap in it.

Example

Select words from those given in the brackets to fill in the gaps:

I have been living in Allahabad————1950. (for, from, since, till). If he————worked hard he would have passed. (would, did, had).

The girl was————as the princess of the forest (told, known, side).

One of the two boys was short, the————was tall, (another, other, next).

(ii) *Transformation of sentences, etc.*

Transformation should be of the following types :

1. Statements into questions.
2. Positive into negative and vice versa.
3. Combining two simple sentences into a complex or compound one.
4. Writing a simple sentence in a different tense.
5. Changing a sentence in the active voice into one in the passive voice or vice versa.
6. Shortening a complex or compound sentence into a simple one.
7. Adding to a simple sentence a clause beginning with a given word.
8. Changing a simple sentence into a complex one.

Brief but clear hints should be given in the brackets against each sentence regarding the transformation required.

Example

Change the following sentences as required in the brackets :

(*a*) People hated the old man. (into passive)

(*b*) He did not come to school yesterday. (Add a clause beginning with because).

(*c*) The hunter shot a number of animals. (into interrogative form).

(*d*) The boy on the tree is my friend. (into a complex sentence)

(iii) Parsing

Candidates should be required only to say what part of speech a word is and how it functions in the sentence. In the case of verbs tense also may be required. Gerunds, participles and infinitives should be avoided.

Example The young *prince married a beautiful* princess *in* 1930.

prince—noun, subject of married.

married—verb, past indefinite, subject—'prince' and object 'princess'.

beautiful—adjective, describing 'princess'.

in—preposition governing '1930'.

(iv) *Analysis*

Candidates should be required only to separate the clauses of the given complex or compound sentence.

Example

Separate the clauses in the following sentence :

The gentleman came out of his room and went into the garden where he saw a young boy who was plucking the beautiful red roses.

Clauses :

(1) The gentleman came out of his room
(2) and went into the garden
(3) where he saw a young boy
(4) who was plucking the beautiful red roses

(v) *Narration*

The question on narration should be carefully framed so as to test candidates' ability to report (1) statements, (2) questions without interrogative words, (3) questions with interrogative words and (4) commands or requests. Teachers in schools must give pupils ample practice in reporting these various types of sentences both in the present and the past. The speech to be reported should, as far as possible, be a continuous one.

Change the following into the indirect narration:

Example

Ramesh went to his father and said, 'Father, please let me go to Delhi tomorrow.' Mr. Sharma smiled and asked, 'Will you take me too with you?' 'I want to go with my friends,' replied Ramesh. 'Why do your friends not want to take me with them?' asked Mr. Sharma. Ramesh was angry and left the room.

Paper II : Translation, Composition and Unseen

(a) *A simple narrative or descriptive passage for translation into English*

The question carries 15 marks. It would, therefore, be advisable to have only 15 sentences in the passage for translation. The passage should not be taken down from old examination papers or books picked up at random but should be carefully prepared so as to test candidates' ability in translating various types of simple, complex and compound sentences.

At least the main areas of English should be covered in this question—simple statements with static motion and action verbs in the present, past and future; both types of questions; adjectives and adverbials; passive constructions; reported speech; conditional sentences; some prepositions of common use (in, on, at, of, for, etc.); serialization in time and space; temporal clauses; place and time expressions; link words like who, which, what, where, although, because, etc. About 60 to 70 per cent of the sentences in the passage should be simple. The passage should be a short anecdote or simple story or simple description of an incident, object or person within the candidates' range of experience and should have movement in it. Abstruse and out-of-the-way words should be avoided. As far as possible, they should be from among the words which the candidates have come across in the books prescribed for them. In assessing candidates' answers credit should be given more for correct construction than for knowledge of individual word items.

A passage constructed on the lines suggested above will cover a large ground, render evaluation more objective than it is at present, give an indication to the teachers and their pupils as to what specific items they should teach and practise through translation and be to that extent a fair test of candidates' knowledge of English.

(b) *A simple Essay*

The volume of the essay required should be indicated in terms of the number of words. An essay of about 200 words should do for High School candidates. Teachers should train their pupils to write simple essays within the required limits.

The topics for the essay should be such as provide a good deal of scope to the candidates to give information from their personal knowledge or observation and about which they have their own thoughts and feelings. Subject to this proviso, descriptions of places, persons, functions, incidents, candidates' own activities, etc., should be suitable essays for High School candidates.

Investigations have revealed that High School pupils, when given an unannounced test, prefer writing about their own towns and villages and places where they have lived for some time,

their parents, friends and teachers and their own activities to describing fairs, festivals, football or hockey matches, etc.

It is thought further that besides clear indications regarding the volume of the essay, a brief specification of approach to the subject would control redundant writing and preclude the chances of rote-learning getting undeserved credit.

(c) *Simple questions on an easy unseen passage*

The unseen passage should be either descriptive or narrative. In point of language it should be simpler than the passages in the text-books. The aim should be to test candidates' ability to comprehend matter presented in simple straightforward English.

It is suggested that there should be five questions on the passage requiring short answers consisting of a sentence or two. Each of these questions should carry 2 marks, 1 being allotted to comprehension and 1 to expression. There should be no questions on appreciation or interpretation.

(d) *Questions to test the ability to spell words correctly*

In this area wholly objective types of questions will be a reliable test of candidates' ability to spell. The words should be selected from the text-books and should mostly be those that are commonly misspelt. A few samples are given below:

(i) Supply the missing letters in the following:
m—ss—ge; ne—g—bour; gr—mm—r; rec(——) ve.

(ii) Underline the word which is correct.
The (whether, whither, weither, weather) is wet.
He was a (skillfull, skilful, skillful) man.
In Akbar's (rain, rein, reign) there was peace.
He spent his (summer, summar, sumar) vacation in Almora.

(iii) Give the past forms of:
fly; beg; learn; strike.

(iv) Make adjectives from:
beauty; please; north; heat.

(e) *Punctuation*

Here too purely objective types of questions should be given. The main aim should be to test candidates' knowledge of the use of *capital letters, comma, full stop, mark of interrogation* and *inverted commas* in a continuous passage. It is suggested that there should be 16 missing punctuation marks in the given passage and 1 mark should be allotted to 4 punctuation marks. The passage selected should not be from the text-book but it should be, in respect of language, easier than the passages in the text-books.

Examples

Put in capital letters and punctuation marks:

I quite agree with my friend replied the king but the poor

peasants cannot work now the landlords have started beating them cruelly the poor men cannot go to the fields we cannot get any wheat how can we get bread then.

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH TO TRANSLATION

By S. P. Singh
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The word, 'translation', is used in a wide variety of contexts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following imports of this word :—

1. Expressing the sense of (word, sentence, book) in or into another language. 2. Putting a (highly) figurative language into 'direct language' (or plain words). 3. Conveying or introducing (idea, principle) from one into another. 4. Inferring or declaring the significance of.... 5. Interpreting (signs, movements, conduct, etc.). 6. Transforming, and 7. Imparting motion with rotation. In the context of language, 'translation' means :—

1. Putting (a highly figurative language such as a metaphor) into direct language, and
2. Expressing (statements, etc. from one language) into another language.

Thus translation may be thought of as a continuum from 'rendering into the same language' to 'rendering into a different language'.

Translation involves :—

1. Interpretation, 2. Selection (conscious or unconscious) of words with the patterns in which they are used, having the same or similar sense, and 3. Combination.

These processes are noticeable in translation both in 'direct language' as well as in the 'other language'.

Linguistic Machines and Translation

It has been frequently suggested that 'it is possible to construct a machine that would translate one kind of symbol into another kind of symbol.' According to Carroll, 'the translation problem might be handled with greater generality if it were possible to decode any language into some general set of *semantic units*..... This set of semantic units, in what we might call "Basic Communicese", would then become the common denominator for mechanical translation devices. For example, a passage in Arabic would be translated into "Basic Communicese", and then into any other standard language we please.'

The translation method of teaching English preserves this procedure.

I remember how I was taught English in Class III. Our teacher's procedure was to give literal meanings of his words. These literal meanings were, in fact, 'Basic Communicese'. When an entire sentence was translated into 'Basic Communicese' it gave a very awkward meaning and many a time it did not sound sense. The teacher would then give a better expression to it.

Let me illustrate it by an example. We were taught (and we teach our children still) that the word 'have' means 'रखता है।', and when this word occurred in a sentence, our teacher used to give a literal translation to it in Hindi, e.g.: 'He has two hands', 'वह दो हाथ रखता है।' This literal translation, being awkward, he used to add to it, 'अर्थात् उसके दो हाथ हैं।'

The above example supports the view that *translation requires* decoding into some sets of semantic units and then putting them into appropriate expressions of another language.

The Literal Translation

It has been our attempt to find a synonym in our own language to each word of a foreign language.

Putting synonyms in our own language to different words of a sentence of a different language more often than not fails to give the sense.

The structures or patterns of expression of a language are gestalts—wholes—and they baffle our analysis. The gestalts of the expression of one language differ from those of another language.

Hence, a literal translation is bound to fail. A word-for-word translation can lead us only to absurdities, like मैं दो हाथ रखता हूँ। (I have two hands), which we have to mitigate by appealing to its simple sense which is nothing but our attempt to read some *meaning* into what actually is *meaningless.*

By attending to literal translation, the students involve themselves in unforeseen word-difficulties.

I may, therefore, press my point here once more that the literal translations of words (e. g. 'have' translated as 'रखता है' ।) are merely semantic units to be translated further into appropriate expressions. With practice, translation into semantic units becomes an unconscious process but over-intrusions many a time are experienced by us when we are engaged in translation.

The Units of Speech

Miller's and Selfridge's study on language-units can be summed up as below:—

The easier learning is of meaning material—because meaningful material preserves the short-range associations of ordinary language. The units are phrases. The results of Miller's and

Selfridge's study indicate that the phrases which can be put together are fairly short. We can assume that these are the combinations of words that can be grasped as a unit by the learner. These units, then, are put together by the learner in complex serial learning.

Language, according to Miller and Selfridge, may be viewed as chains of serial dependencies. The individual's immediate *memory span has its own limits. Hence, it is most reasonable* to think that we retain our languages in units of phrases which are neither too long nor too short.

The units of our speech are combinable only in certain ways and not in others. Hence, the knowledge of the structures of sentences should be acquired by the students before an attempt to translate them is made.

Some Suggestions

1. It is profitable to compare the phrases, idioms and structures of one language with those of other languages.
2. The different 'intentions' of different structures should be carefully grasped. The fidelity of translation, in fact, depends upon interpretation.
3. A. S. Hornby's suggestion that the student, when he learns a noun or an adjective, should become familiar with the patterns in which that noun or adjective is normally used, is important. A grasp of structures along with words will help us quite a lot in translation.
4. Translation should have no place in the teaching of English texts. It ought to be a separate exercise and should be the concern of the Hindi (or the language) teacher.

Hindi, being the mother tongue, the students have some mastery over the phrases and structures of their own language. A search for their equivalents in English can be quite interesting. The contrast and comparison of English and Hindi structures in the light of Hindi grammar always has some meaning to the pupils.

These are some of my observations which I am placing before the readers for their consideration. My only object is to draw the attention of the thinkers towards the need of a new approach to the theory of translation and its practice too.

TEACHING OF POETRY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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It is needless to emphasize, at the outset, that in the present democratic set-up of our country, the matter and method for teaching

poetry to Indian children should be completely re-orientated, if the teaching of poetry is to be effective and of any value to them. Much of the English poetry which is being taught at present in our secondary schools should disappear from the school curriculum. Certain classes of English poems which are characterized by obscurity of language, difficulty in the thought or sentiments or associations expressed are not at all suitable for our children in secondary schools. Usually we find that, contrary to the requirements and needs of our children, a number of difficult poems, though of great poetic value, are prescribed for study in different schools. Generally in a single stanza there are too many unknown words which need elaborate explanations. Obviously the teacher is concerned largely with the explanation of the words and phrases and sometimes with the discussion of historical details of the poet and the poem. This is how a poetry lesson is taught in our schools at present.

Before actually coming to the discussion of the method of teaching poetry, it will be in the fitness of things to define Poetry as such. Coleridge once defined Prose as words in their best order and Poetry as the best words in their best order, meaning thereby that poetry is a more powerful form of expression than prose. It is more powerful because it affects the whole man, not only through his intellect but through his senses, and what is loosely called his imagination, and it works upon his emotions.

Not only does a poet choose his words with care but he also arranges them so as to produce rhythm or music. As Ballard says, the regular 'beat' of his verse tends to lull the mind to sleep, and puts it into a proper state to receive the full message of the poem. Mood, as Lamborn observes, is far more important in poetry than meaning. In fact rhythm has often a close bearing on meaning. The speed with which Sir Bedivere acts is well reflected in the following lines from *Morte D'Arthur* :

> Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
> And, leaping down the ridges lightly plunged
> Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword
> And strongly wheel'd and threw it.

Some people are of the opinion that verse should be read as if you were talking; but in my opinion this is wrong for this completely destroys much of the beauty of verse.

Poetry, more than prose, needs to be visualised and appreciated. This means that in the teaching of poetry the right association of ideas is more important than mere meanings. Appreciation of poetry is an experience. It is something creative and not primarily a critical activity. While composing a poem, the poet has to select words, rhythms and sounds. The reader creates

the poem anew for himself by means of the poet's words. The sympathetic guidance of the teacher is therefore more necessary in the teaching of poetry than of prose and it is his main business to arouse the children's awareness or consciousness to the living experience which has given birth to the poem. It will not be wrong to say that poetry is characterized by beauty, beauty of form, beauty of language, beauty of thoughts, mood or feeling. In teaching poetry the main mission of the teacher should be not only to acquaint his children with the material of the poem but also to stimulate in them an insight into the delightful or beautiful that is portrayed in the poem. Thus the children should be enabled to grasp all the sides of a poem—its central experience, the images by which it presents the experience, and the music of the rhythm, rhyme, and words which express the tone and inner spirit of the experience.

The importance of the introduction of poetry into our literature syllabus should not be overestimated. Education seeks to enlarge the individual capacity for living well and fully, and this end cannot be reached directly or completely if we banish poetry from the syllabus. In teaching poetry we keep our eye on a distant goal—the man that the boy will become in course of time. An adult can find in poetry something which poetry alone can give. The trained reader can share the intensity or subtlety or complexity of any emotional moment as it is concentrated and heightened in a poem. Much of that, of course, is beyond the reach of a child. All the same, if a child has not had training in appreciating poetry it is rare for a man to develop that power of sharing at a later stage.

Apart from this distant goal, poetry in schools must give some immediate pleasure and some satisfaction of emotional and spiritual needs. Young boys reveal a natural love for poetry and exhibit an unembarrassed delight in nursery rhymes and jingles and the narrative element in poetry.

Now that the study of English in our country will not be what it used to be in the past, poetry should be taught for enjoyment of thought, feeling, imagery, rhythm and never for drill in the use of the language. By enjoyment, however, we must mean something finer than a passive acceptance of literature with a minimum of effort. If poetic literature can be comprehended only with difficulty and strain, it is unsuitable to the class in front of us; we have to find such poems as our children can enjoy without much explanation.

It is difficult to find such poems which are interesting to children of the age-group twelve to seventeen. Poems for the children who learn English as a foreign language for about six years should

have a simple vocabulary and grammatical construction. The poem chosen should be simple enough for the children to grasp the general meaning when they hear it for the first time. Dr. (Miss) Forrester rightly suggests that there should not be more than an average of one new word in a line. The meaning of new words and phrases should as far as possible be guessed by the children from the context.

Ballads make an excellent start because of their feelings for strong situations, stirring speech, swift action and personality, (John Gilpin, Lochinvar, Jesse James, etc.), but some simple lyrics may also be included in the early stages. Possible poems for schools might be the *Ballad of East and West*, *Morte D'Arthur*, the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Lady of Shalott*, the *Piper in the Street*, etc.

Is it really permissible to speak of teaching poetry? Things like the multiplication tables can indeed be taught, but not poetry. Poems exist: boys exist: the teacher can bring them together or he can 'take' a poem to the boys. What happens in a successful poetry lesson? Words, chosen and arranged with all the conscious and unconscious skill of the poet in order to make some impression, have life breathed into them by an understanding adult, the teacher, so that the boys leave the actual world to enter the poet's world in which someone speaks directly to them. The teacher must have a catholic taste and a genuine love for poetry. Then he must be able to read a poem aloud as if he loved it and was absorbed by it.

As already pointed out the aim of teaching poetry is not so much to improve the child's knowledge of English as to add to his joy and increase his power of appreciation of beauty. To ensure this enjoyment the teacher must see that he does not spoil the first impression of the poem by introducing it to the class with a long biographical sketch of the poet, or a summary of the poem. A short introductory talk about the background of the poem before it is read is deemed advisable in the early stages, even though some teachers go to the heart of the poem direct by reading it aloud to the class. How much the message and beauty of a poem will be conveyed to the pupils will depend on how the teacher reads it. The teacher should be moved by the emotion of a poem before he can read it effectively in the natural intonation of speech. He should enter into the spirit of the poem and the spirit and mood of the poet. The inspired teacher will make the poet speak again through him and the children will share his enjoyment of the poem. The advice of Alexander Haddow to teachers of poetry deserves to be remembered. It was :

'Read each poem twice, give the children time to form their

own impression, invite them to criticise and help them in doing so. Let the poetry period be as far as possible a period of joy, a period of pondering over things they love already. Let them choose for themselves the poems they are to learn by heart, each choosing his own favourites. Thus only can we develop a taste for poetry and train their ear to the variety of beautiful sounds. Thus only can we rouse in them some idea of the wealth of poetry that lies before them. Remember that we must aim at turning out readers of poetry, not students of poetry'

Let us take the following short poem of Christina Rossetti for illustration :—

EVENING

The evening is coming,
The sun sinks to rest;
The crows are all flying
Straight home to the nest

The lesson will be introduced by a few pointed questions to draw from the pupils answers that would depict the scene on any similar evening. Then the teacher should read the poem clearly, and with correct phrasing and intonations while the pupils listen with their books closed. After this reading, the teacher should ask his pupils to open their books, and he again reads, with the object of emphasizing the music and beauty of the poem. Then the teacher will develop the lesson by discussing with his pupils the various ideas contained in each line, and then again he reads, again to impress on his pupils the music and beauty of the language. We must always remember that poetry is essentially music that is something to be heard rather than read, and the teacher can most help his pupils to appreciate it by reading it aloud. And selected pupils will also read it aloud.

The detailed study of the poem should only be begun after the music and beauty and rhythm of the poem have been discovered. But this detailed study should not be concerned with grammatical forms of explanation of words. It must only concern itself with questions relevant to the ideas of the text, for example :—'Why does the sun sink?' Why are the crows flying straight home to their nest? The answers to these questions will lead up to the paraphrase of the poem, and when the poem is wholly understood the teacher will again inspire his pupils by reading the poem aloud again.

Should children be obliged to commit poems to memory? Modern opinion is in favour of recitation, but there should be no compulsion to learn a poem by heart.

Children's enjoyment and appreciation of poetry can be increased by getting them to learn by heart and recite passages of

poetry chosen by the teacher as well as by themselves. We should bear in mind that originally poetry was meant to be recited and sung and not read. The poems selected for recitation should be really enjoyable. They should have adequate rhythm. Children should be asked to memorize the poem only after they have understood it, and after the teacher has read it to them several times to make sure that they have got its rhythm. If the children have actually enjoyed the poems, their recitation will become more or less spontaneous.

A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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LINGUISTIC SCIENCE or a scientific study of the nature and functioning of language has made great strides in the United States during the last thirty years. Its recent advances have been so spectacular and the change in our view of language has been so great that ordinary scholars of languages find it almost impossible even to read the materials that are being brought out in linguistics today. It is surprising that the impact of this modern scientific study of language on the techniques and procedures of our language teaching has been so small that the views and practices of a pre-scientific era still dominate our secondary schools. The same is the case in many other fields of human life where beliefs and practices have clung to conventional procedures long after the scientific evidence which should have led to their repudiation, was available.

The application of the principles and results of the modern linguistic science to the teaching of grammar has shattered all conventional dogmas and beliefs concerning the place and function of grammar in a language-teaching programme. The new approach to grammar rests primarily on a fundamentally different view of the nature of grammar—a view that has given tremendous enthusiasm and fresh hope to students and teachers that the results of their study will give them an insight into the nature and function of language.

The values claimed for the traditional study of grammar in schools have been challenged during the past fifty years. Too often the adversaries of grammar have failed to offer its substitute and practical suggestions for giving an understanding of the mechanism of language. It is however true that much precious

time and energy have been wasted in the past in teaching rules of grammar, which have hardly helped the young learner acquire proficiency in English. After visiting schools in fifty representative towns, Dr. Dora S. Smith wrote that 'more time is being spent in high school English classes in America today upon grammar and usage than upon any other single phase of instruction.' Similar conditions prevail in India too, where J. C. Nesfield's *Grammar* held the field for a long time.

Research workers have been busy in different countries where English is taught either as a primary language or as a secondary one, devising new methods and techniques with a view to helping the children acquire good English, which has been one of the major concerns of their educational systems. One would be shocked to discover that in spite of the amount of time given to grammar in schools we have not succeeded in teaching English satisfactorily, for the language errors of school children and college students show a persistency of the same difficulties and lapses. If the improved teaching techniques and modern mechanical aids do not help ward off persistent errors, the need for a dispassionate examination of the contents of the syllabus is greater than ever before.

In the past we indulged in hair-splitting over grammatical niceties and wrangled about questions of grammatical correctness, assuming that the rules of grammar as they are stated in our school grammars are the measures of correctness. Usages like 'It is me,' 'I will go' are still taken as a gross violation of the established rules of grammar. It a teacher comes forward with a bold assertion that they are correct on the ground that they are widely used even by the educated native speakers of English, his fitness for teaching English would be questioned. 'It is me' is condemned as wrong because the form 'me' violates the rule that 'the verb *to be* takes the same case after it as stands before it.' It is interesting to note that 'It is I' is not used by anybody except linguistic pedants in a classroom. It is unnatural and has no place in the spoken English of the educated people whose mother tongue is English.

We condemn 'It is me' as violating the rule for case following the verb 'to be', but we all accept 'It is you' as perfectly good English. Historically, 'It is me' uses the same case form as 'It is you.' 'Me' and 'You' were both dative-accusative forms in Old English. 'You', the old dative-accusative form, is now accepted in 'It is you', because we use it in that situation. 'Ye', the old nominative form in the second person, was replaced by 'you' in course of time. Thus the rule that the verb 'to be' takes the same case after it as is used before it is not the ultimate

authority and does not apply in this case, but must be subordinated to the drift and development of the language.[1]

In like manner, school grammars usually give as the one means of indicating future time the combination of *Shall* and *Will* with the infinitives, and name it the 'future tense'. There have been vigorous discussions concerning the use of *Shall* and *Will*. Scientific studies made in the U.S.A. give results that are in sharp contrast to the conventional rules. There are hardly any accepted views of what the correct usage of these two words is. The rule of grammar that *Shall* is used in the first person and *Will* in the second and third persons to indicate the future tense has little support from actual usage. It is a creation of a rational grammar developed in all its intricacies in the eighteenth century by grammarians like Lindley Murray whose *English Grammar* first published in 1795 ran through two hundred editions during the nineteenth century. A recording and examination of some twenty thousand instances of *Shall* and *Will* occurring in (a) fifty British dramas produced during the last three hundred and fifty years, (b) eighteen British dramas produced from 1907 to 1918, and (c) eighteen American dramas produced from 1907 to 1918, reveal the following astonishing facts:[2]

1. *Will* with the first person has always been more frequently used than *Shall* (e.g. I will, we will) from 70 to 93 per cent, and *Shall* (e.g. I shall, we shall) from 7 to 30 per cent.
2. *Will* with the second person has more and more displaced *Shall*, so that it is now used in about 80 per cent of the cases and *Shall* in about 20 per cent.
3. With the third person also *Will* has tended to displace *Shall* being now used in about 85 per cent of the cases, with *Shall* only in about 15 per cent.
4. The frequent assertion that *Will* is impossible in questions with the first person is inaccurate as illustrated by the following classical example:[3]

   Alice (to Helen)—Will I do as your guide?

It will be manifest from the above discussion that the *Shall* forms are not natural to the genius and historical development of English, that they have been prescribed by school grammars based on the Latin syntax and that they are almost eliminated from the usage of modern English. In the light of these researches it is wise to ignore the grammatical rule that *Shall* in the first person corresponds to *Will* in the second and third per-

[1] Fries, Charles C., *Teaching of English*, p. 29.
[2] Fries, Charles C., *American English Grammar*, p. 154.
[3] Augustus Thomas, *The Witching Hour*, p. 771.

sons. Such a scientific approach will greatly facilitate the study of English, for the uses of *Shall* and *Will* with all their intricacies occupy much of the teachers' and pupils' time at the early stages of the English course without corresponding gain in terms of mastery in speech and writing.

English grammar is full of such fallacies and absurdities. As Pamela Gordon puts it, no grammarian can successfully explain why *Go* is an infinitive in 'I shall go' and *Singing* a gerund in 'I am singing.' A noun, according to the traditional grammar, is the name of a person, place or thing. In the sentence 'Wisdom is a virtue,' both *Wisdom* and *Virtue* are not names of persons, places or things and yet they are considered nouns by all common school grammars. A verb is defined as an action word. 'To be' is considered a verb though it does not denote any action.

The main source of our erroneous grammatical ideas today is the nineteenth-century school grammars which attempted to reduce the language to rules and to purge it of all its impurities. They wrongly repudiated usage even of the best authors as the standard correctness. This attitude is not simply the recognition of a standard, but a kind of linguistic purism which ignores practice and sets up theoretical reasoning as the guide. Their rules were either borrowed from the Latin syntax or were the new creations based upon reason or the laws of thought, which are not a safe and reliable guide to correctness. As a matter of fact, grammatical correctness must rest on usage. Difficulties arise when usage is not unanimous, in which case a reasonable guiding principle should be to choose that form which agrees with the tendencies of English as can be seen from the history of the language. Usage does not remain fixed at all times and in all places—a fact which has profound bearing on the teaching of English as a secondary language.

I have given considerable thought to the teaching of English grammar in our secondary schools and am being inclined to the view that most of the grammatical categories and their exhaustive treatment in the classroom are not at all helpful to the learning of English. I wonder how a knowledge of the grammatical categories like Possessive of Interest, Incomplete Verb of Incomplete Predication, Future Perfect Continuous Tense or a difference between an Object and a Complement may enable a child to speak or write better English. Many speakers of English are unable to define or even identify by technical terms the grammatical elements of a sentence and yet are able to speak and write acceptable English.

Our so-called grammars are not logical in their treatment of tenses they profess to deal with. For example, they define tense

as the time of an action. They usually give as the one means of indicating future time the combination of *Shall* and *Will* with the infinitive form of the verb. The following combinations have a valid claim to be included in an English future tense, but our common grammars assign them to some form of the present tense :

I am going to I am to I am about to I I desire to I want to I need to I intend to I expect to I ought to I have got to I mean to I have to I may I can I must	fly to London next month.

Sentences like 'If it rains, I cannot go tomorrow,' 'I am going to Bombay tomorrow,' 'I may (might, should) go to Bombay next week' also refer to actions to take place in future time. They carry full meanings and refer to the future because of the nature of their meanings. These devices for the expression of the future originated in those words and forms with meanings naturally looking to the future for fulfilment. Grammar books do not consider them to be in the future tense, because they are guided by the *forms of* the verbs and not their *meanings* or *function*. We should discard our old ideas about tenses and determine the time of an action on the basis of its meaning rather than its form. We should eschew from our language-teaching programme all such intellectual gymnastics as are not conducive to the effective learning of the language. Effective learning of English does not depend upon whether a verb is auxiliary, defective or anomalous; whether a word is a direct object or an indirect object; whether *army* is a common noun or a collective noun; whether *my* is a possessive pronoun or a possessive adjective; whether a form is a gerund or a participle or a verbal noun; whether a verb is in the subjunctive mood or in the infinitive mood; whether an adjective is definite demonstrative or indefinite demonstrative. While trying to understand the significance of such jargon, the young learner

misses the wood in the trees. The enormous amount of time spent on learning such unnecessary and extraneous material of grammar can be utilised more profitably in mastering the four basic skills of language learning, namely, hearing, speaking, reading and writing.

If it is rightly or wrongly believed that grammar cannot be dropped altogether from an English course, the question is 'What kind of English grammar should be taught'? so as to derive maximum benefit from its teaching. It is indisputable that grammar is not a separate subject like history or science, but is only one small part of the whole English course. According to linguistic scientists, grammar is a branch of linguistics and should be rewritten in the light of the latest investigations into that useful science. They hold that language is an aspect of human behaviour and grammar should describe the actual behaviour of language. English grammar should be the descriptive analysis of the formal contrastive features of the English language that comprise its system of devices to convey certain meanings and relationships. It is important to keep in mind that a variety of formal devices may signal grammatical meanings. Among the most frequent elements used in various languages to signal grammatical structure are word order, inflection (bound morphemes), correlation of forms, function words, intonation, stress and pauses. What we need is a grammar that describes the forms and syntax of present-day English accurately; a grammar that records the facts of the actual usage of those who speak English as their mother tongue and does not depend for its authority on a make-believe standard of speech; a grammar that explains these facts in the light of their history, not by means of *a priori* reasoning; and finally, a grammar that attempts to set forth the patterns or tendencies that have shown themselves in the drift of the English language.

It follows that the descriptive grammar of English should deal with current usage and that the rules of grammar derived from it will not prescribe what is correct, but will describe the ways in which language operates to express ideas that are valid in so far as they are accurate generalizations. Its study will increase the linguistic awareness of the learner and enable him to use the language as an effective means of expression.

An ideal thing to do would be to use no grammar book in the classroom. Dr. Michael West rightly says: 'A grammar book bears the same relation to speaking as a good book about tennis bears to playing tennis; both tell the learner what he ought to do. But he might know the whole contents of both yet be unable either to speak the language or play the game.' The readers in

English should be so written and graded that whatever grammatical items we want children to learn with a view to mastering oral and written English should be included in them and fixed in their minds through drill and exercises given at the end of each lesson. While reading these lessons, the child will unconsciously assimilate the modes of linguistic behaviour including stress and intonation. The drill in structure patterns will enable him to speak the language without knowing the rules of grammar. If he makes a mistake, no grammatical rule will be quoted by the teacher, who will repeatedly drill him in the correct pattern till he acquires the correct form as a matter of language habit. During the course of drill and subsequent reading both intensive and extensive, he observes certain fixed modes of linguistic behaviour. For example, he observes that a verb takes 's' in the third person and singular number to describe a habitual action and a noun takes 's' when it refers to two or more objects. Such repeated observations lead him to his own generalizations, which are his own rules of grammar for future guidance. He should be encouraged to write them in a note-book designed for this purpose. This note-book will be his grammar book. This process of observation of the behaviour of the English language goes on continuously, enabling the child to discover and compile his own grammar. If the material for intensive and extensive reading is not sufficient for achieving this objective, it can be supplemented by the teacher through additional exercises, games and oral devices. If a grammar book is needed, its function should be to provide additional exercises to supplement those given in the reader and give generalizations inductively arrived at for ready reference and comparison with the child's own generalizations. Such a grammar must follow the child's ability to use the language forms without reference to grammatical rules, but just through imitation, practice and repetition.

It will thus be seen that the struggle to apply to the problems of foreign language learning the findings of linguistics has shifted the focus of our attention from the traditional methods of grammar-grinding to the treatment of functional grammar. What is urgently needed is readiness to free our minds from age-old dogmas and prejudices and put to the best use the findings of the linguistic science. We would be well advised to join the grammarian's funeral and give his ghost a decent burial if our programme of language teaching were to meet with success commensurate with the time and energy spent upon it.[1]

[1] This paper was presented to the 33rd Session of the All-India Educational Conference held at Chandigarh during the last week of December 1958.

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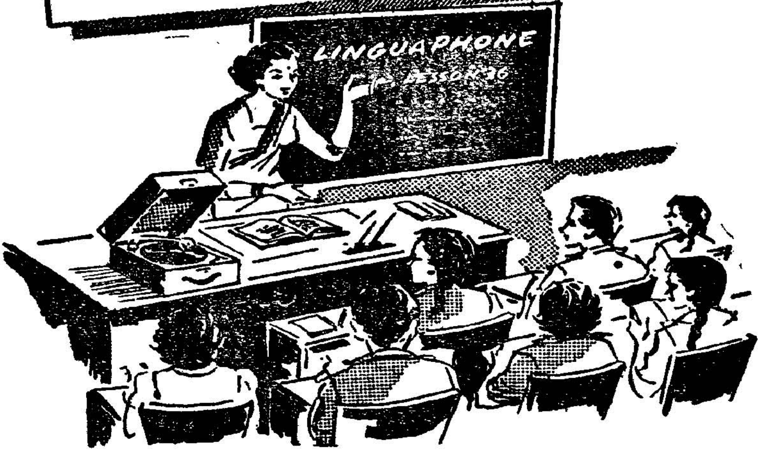
first you listen



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